

Policy for Approval and Extensions of Qualifications for regulation in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the sector requirements for the approval and extension of vocational qualifications in the health sector in accordance with the Sector Qualifications Strategy (see Annex One).

This policy consists of three sections: section 1 explains the procedures for approval, section 2 deals with extensions and section 3 relates to the appeals procedure.

- 1.2 Skills For Health as a Sector Skills Council is responsible for ensuring that vocational qualifications meet employer needs, comply with the Skills For Health Learning Design Principles and are underpinned by current National Occupational Standards.
- 1.3 This policy operates in the context of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales (CQFW) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
- 1.4 Skills for Health will work with statutory bodies to ensure the qualifications developed meet any necessary regulatory standards and relevant legislation.
- 1.5 Skills for Health require Awarding Organisations to seek support for any proposed development of qualifications in collaboration and dialogue with the Skills For Health Learning Innovation and Development Group (LIDG). Only qualifications designated high scrutiny by the LIDG are required to seek approval at the end of their development.

2. Statement of Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales (CQFW) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) but not the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

- 2.2 Qualifications designated low scrutiny by the LIDG are not subject to this policy. Approval to develop low scrutiny qualifications is given by LIDG. Unless otherwise stated no further scrutiny of these qualifications is required.
- 2.3 This policy excludes the approval of qualifications or units of learning for direct inclusion in the CQFW or SCQF.
- 2.4 Skills for Health does not Quality Assure the qualification curriculum, determine the credit value of units, guided learning hours, notional learning hours, or assessment methodology.
- 2.5 Skills for Health is not responsible for determining which qualifications will meet Regulatory or Professional Body requirements for registration. Awarding Organisations are responsible for ensuring that qualifications are supported by the relevant Regulatory or Professional Body.

3. High Scrutiny Approval Criteria

- 3.1 Skills for Health will approve high scrutiny vocational qualifications provided that the proposed qualification(s) demonstrate the following:
 - I. Meet service and workforce sector requirements (see Annex One).
 - II. Are underpinned by current NOS and mapped to the NHS KSF (as required)
 - III. Learning development and progression
 - IV. Evaluation criteria

Section 1

4. High Scrutiny Approval Process

4.1 Application

The Awarding Body seeking approval will:

- 1. Complete the Request Form
- 2. Supply supporting evidence to demonstrate how the criteria are met
- 3. Send the application to: qualifications@skillsforhealth.org.uk
- 4. Send all information by the first working day of the month for consideration that month. Include in the email subject header the text 'qualification approval application'
- 5. Skills for Health will only approve of qualifications that are for use by the Health Sector and underpinned by Skills For Health NOS.

4.2 Review of application

Skills for Health will respond to the request within 20 working days.

4.3 Notification

1. If high scrutiny approval is to be given Skills for Health will inform the Awarding Organisation to that effect in writing.
2. If high scrutiny approval cannot be given at this stage Skills for Health will provide a written response detailing the reasons for this.
3. If high scrutiny approval is conditional upon certain criteria being met this will be outlined in the letter.

Section 2

4. Extensions to qualifications end date

4.1 Application

The Awarding Body seeking an extension will:

1. Complete the Extension Request Form
2. Supply any supporting evidence to demonstrate how the criteria are met
3. Send the application to: qualifications@skillsforhealth.org.uk
4. Send all information by the first working day of the month for consideration that month
5. Include in the email subject header the text 'qualification extension application'

4.2 Review of application for Extension.

4.3 Skills for Health will respond to the request within 20 working days.

4.5 If extension is to be given Skills for Health will inform the Awarding Organisation to that effect in writing.

4.6 If extension cannot be given at this stage Skills for Health will provide a written response detailing the reasons for this.

Section 3

5. Appeals

5.1 Appeals must be in writing to qualifications@skillsforhealth.org.uk and can only be made against procedural criteria.

5.2 There are 3 stages:

Stage One

- Appeals must be received by Skills for Health within twenty one working days of the notification of decision letter being issued
- Acknowledgement of receipt will be sent within 5 working days
- Decision following consideration of the appeal will be given within 30 working days
- If the issue remains unresolved the matter will be referred to the Lead Manager who will respond within 30 working days.
- If the appellant is not happy with outcome they should proceed to stage two.

Stage two

- Appeals against the outcome of stage one must be received by the Divisional Manager within twenty one days of the notification letter
- Acknowledgement of receipt will be given within 5 working days
- Decision following consideration of the appeal will be given within 30 working days from receipt
- If the appellant is not happy with the outcome they should proceed to stage three.

Stage three

- Appeals against the decision and outcome of stage two must be received by Skills for Health Director of Qualifications and Standards within twenty one working days
- Decision following consideration of the appeal will be given within 20 working days from receipt

6. Policy Review

6.1 This Policy will be subject to amendment to reflect changes required by:

- 6.1.1 Sector Qualifications Strategy
- 6.1.2 Sector Qualification Criteria
- 6.1.3 Regulatory Bodies
- 6.1.4 National Credit and Level Frameworks
- 6.1.5 UK Commission for Employment and Skills
- 6.1.6 The Alliance of Sector Skills Councils
- 6.1.7 Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

6.2 The Policy will be reviewed at least annually from the date of adoption of the policy by the Skills for Health Directors Group.

Annex One

Sector Requirements

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Purpose	<p>Proposed vocational qualification(s) must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on robust labour market intelligence and/or emerging sector needs as a result of high profile incidents/issues • Required by the health sector for use in the health sector • In line with the Skills for Health Sector Qualifications Strategy and Action Plans • In line with sector qualification reform proposals • Developed in consultation with relevant employers and representative groups <p><i>Notes for Awarding Organisations:</i></p> <p><i>(1) Proposed qualification(s) must include a clear rationale of the need for such qualification(s) and an indication of the anticipated levels of up-take over the subsequent 3 years. This may be the same information as provided via the WBA.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the health sector and the political dimensions involved it may be necessary to develop vocational qualifications to meet the need of 'top down' initiatives. Such initiatives may be based on high profile incidents and issues in the health sector.</i></p>	2.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Broad content/subject matter	<p>Proposed qualification(s) must be developed with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Occupational Standards (NOS) • Skills for Health Learning Design Principles (LDP) <p>Proposed qualification(s) must be mapped to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Occupational Standards (NOS) and/or National Workforce Competences (NWC) • The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework • The Childrens Common Core • Employability factors identified in the Sector Qualifications Strategy <p>In the context of the overall focus of the qualification(s), developers should consider, where appropriate the inclusion of principles relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of service users • Communication and information sharing • Personal and people development • Health, safety and security • Service improvement • Quality • Equality and diversity (including safeguarding and protecting individuals) <p><i>Notes for Awarding Bodies:</i></p> <p><i>(1) The meaning of the phrase ‘developed with reference to NOS/NWCs’ is described in the Glossary at the end of this document.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Where there are no relevant NOS and/or NWCs the proposed qualification(s) will be for a clearly identified role in the health sector.</i></p> <p><i>(3) Details of any relevant current policies or guidelines that underpinned content development should also be provided.</i></p>	6.1, 6.2, 6.3

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Structure	<p>The term 'structure' in this context refers to the ways in which units are combined to create the proposed qualification(s). With regard to structure, Awarding Organisations will need to take into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility – is the qualification(s) structure flexible enough to enable effective uptake (e.g. through the use of mandatory and optional units)? • Accessibility – is the qualification(s) structure accessible to the target market? • Progression – is the qualification(s) structure designed to enable progression? (e.g. horizontal and vertical progression, entry requirements) • Level – is the qualification(s) structure suitable for the level? • Qualification structure will specify the maximum number of credits that can be APEL'd <p><i>Notes for Awarding Bodies</i></p> <p><i>(1) Where appropriate, the allocation of time between work based learning and other forms of learning must be made explicit by the Awarding Bodies.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Overall, due to the diversity of the health sector the structure of the proposed qualification(s) will be considered on a case by case basis.</i></p>	2.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3
Qualification title	There are no requirements identified beyond the QCF regulations	6.1, 6.2, 6.3

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Use of shared or transferable units	<p>In line with the Sector Qualifications Strategy the use of shared units is encouraged.</p> <p>Shared units may relate to, but not be restricted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Management and leadership • Training and development • Health, safety and security • Team and partnership working • Application of number (numeracy) <p><i>Notes for Awarding Organisations</i></p> <p><i>(1) Skills for Health will seek to ensure that shared and/or transferable units are used within proposed qualification(s) where appropriate.</i></p>	2.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3
Evaluation	The proposed evaluation strategy should demonstrate how the AO will ensure that the qualification remains fit for purpose	